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ive Year Plan Message

In 1997, the District acquired nearly 100,000 acres, continuing the successful land acquisition momentum experienced last year. Once again, thanks to the dedication of our staff, and our public and private partners, we are able to report great progress in our land acquisition and stewardship programs.

We are now near completion, or have made significant headway, on many of our major long-term projects. These include lands needed for regional ecosystem management efforts, such as Kissimmee River restoration, the construction of Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) filter-marshes, and the restoration of more natural water flows to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. We also assisted in acquiring two large natural areas that are critical to maintaining south Florida's ecological integrity — the Kissimmee Prairie and the Okaloacoochee Slough.

While we celebrate these accomplishments, we recognize that we have much more to do. The projects listed on the following pages of this document attest to the great need for further acquisitions and, equally important, for the proper management of all lands once acquired.

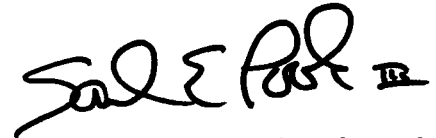
The 1997, Florida Legislature recognized the importance of these issues through passage of two related bills. The first legislative action was a directive to all state agencies that are recipients of Preservation 2000 (P-2000) funds to outline the remaining needs and priorities for the final years of the program. Our report echoed that of others: that the program has been extremely successful in the acquisition of much needed lands, and that the amount of needed lands far exceeds the projected funding amounts. Our analysis indicates that when P-2000 ends, our agency alone will face a \$250 million acquisition deficit, resulting in 175,000 acres of needed water resources development lands not being acquired. In addition, planning studies indicate that even more land will be necessary in the Kissimmee, Upper East Coast, and Caloosahatchee Basins to meet water resource development needs in these areas.

The second legislative action eliminated the funding cap on the use of "Save Our Rivers" dollars for management and stewardship purposes. Previously, only 25% of these funds were available for management activities. This action gives us a lot more flexibility to use these funds where most needed. That's the good news. The bad news is that, for the past 10 years, the amount of Save Our Rivers funding has remained relatively fixed. Today, we are trying to manage twice as much land with the same amount of money that we received three years ago. Land management needs keep

going up — both in costs and acreage — while funding stays the same.

The growing acceptance of conservation easements are a possible solution to the limited availability of funds for both acquisition and management. These easements preserve important natural resources while allowing private landowners to retain low intensity use of their property. The cost of easements is far less than fee title acquisition. The easement concept also leaves the private landowners as the steward of the land, thereby reducing public management costs. We have several of these transactions planned for the coming year.

The District's Save Our Rivers land acquisition program is a multipurpose tool that preserves rare and unique resources, protects areas of special local interest, and prepares the ground for the water resource management needs of the 21st Century. As P-2000 draws to a close, we must concentrate on developing strong support for a revised program that will allow us to adequately address our critical "unmet" water resource development needs in the future.



— Samuel E. Poole III

Introduction

As part of its mission, the South Florida Water Management District protects and manages the wetlands, lakes, bays, and rivers of south and central Florida. The District, a regional agency, is the largest of five water management districts established across Florida to safeguard the quality and supply of each region's water resources, now and for the future.

State law requires the water management districts to manage water and related resources for the benefit of the public. And the mission of this agency is to specifically provide environmental protection and enhancement, water supply, flood control, and water-quality protection.

In 1981, the Florida Legislature created the "Save Our Rivers" program for the districts to acquire environmentally sensitive land. The legislation produced Section 373.59, Florida Statutes, known as the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. The trust fund receives revenues from the documentary stamp tax, which the Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers.

The statute enables the water management districts to use money from the trust fund to acquire fee title or other interest in lands needed to manage, protect, and conserve the state's water resources. The act specifies an allocation formula for each district and the process for them to use the fund.

The Preservation 2000 Act, enacted by the Legislature in 1990, also added land-acquisition funds to the Save Our Rivers program. P-2000 created the Florida Preservation Trust Fund, which DEP also administers. Land acquisition with P-2000 money requires that projects meet criteria of both the P-2000 and Save Our Rivers programs.

As part of its process in acquiring these lands, the District must consider the property's manageability, surface and ground water systems, and the formation of corridors for the critical interaction of wildlife populations. In managing these public lands, the District ensures the maintenance of the water resources, fish and wildlife populations, and native plant communities in an environmentally acceptable manner.

The District also opens these lands for appropriate recreational use consistent with their environmental sensitivity. Other government agencies and the private sector may assist the District with the care of these lands through the design and implementation of appropriate stewardship programs.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Lands Trust Fund shall be used to acquire fee title or other interest in lands necessary for water management, water supply and the conservation and protection of water resources. In addition,

lands that include other features are eligible as well. These include, but are not limited to:

- River and stream flood plains and flow ways
- River and stream flood hazard areas
- Littoral zones
- Springs and lakes
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Wetlands
- Wellfields
- Unique water features

Each January, the South Florida Water Management District must submit to the Legislature and the Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to requirements of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund, an annual update to its Save Our Rivers Five-Year Plan.

In 1988, the District began a proactive program to identify lands within its 16-county jurisdiction that might be suitable for acquisition. The agency reviews Save Our Rivers applications from private and public groups, and the staff considers other sites based on the District's strategic planning needs.

LAND EVALUATION MATRIX

The District developed an evaluation matrix that addresses the water- and natural-resource values of each parcel. The matrix consists of the following 10 parameters:

- Water Management
- Water Supply
- Conservation and Protection of Water Resources
- Manageability
- Habitat Diversity
- Species Diversity
- Connectedness
- Rarity
- Vulnerability
- Nature Oriented Human Use

In addition to the resource matrix, the District uses a "project benefits criteria system" to address projects that protect the integrity of ecological systems and provide multiple on- and off-site benefits. These include preserving fish and wildlife habitat, recreation space, and water-recharge areas. Projects are included that can help reverse the decline in the ecological, aesthetic, recreational, and economic value of the state's water resources.

This system applies to projects designed primarily to supply off-site water resource benefits. Thus, the District doesn't evaluate the lands themselves, as with the resource-based matrix, but it considers how these lands will be used within a described project. Examples for benefits provided by such lands would be:

- A. Distribution systems to simulate sheet flow inputs into wetlands systems
- B. Detention systems operated to simulate the natural hydrograph for delivery of water into natural wetlands, lakes or estuaries
- C. Water quality treatment system using managed or unmanaged wetland vegetation processes
- D. Groundwater recharge and/or water table control to allow recharge to aquifers or retain seepage from water-storage facilities.
- E. Buffer access or transitional areas necessary to protect core lands from adverse impacts, provide wildlife corridors, provide for public enjoyment of the core land, or isolate certain management practices, such as flooding and prescribed burning

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARL	Conservation and Recreation Lands Program
CREW	Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
DOF	Division of Forestry
DOT	Department of Transportation
EEWEA	East Everglades Wildlife and Environmental Area
FNST	Florida National Scenic Trail
FTA	Florida Trail Association
GFC	Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SOR	Save Our Rivers
SWIM	Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
WUMP	Water Use Management Plan

WATER RESOURCE PROJECTS

A third method the District uses to screen prospective land candidates for the Save Our Rivers Five-Year Plan is the SOR Selection Criteria for Water Resource Projects. This applies to projects intended to supply off-site water resource benefits.

These water resource projects must meet all of the following criteria: (any land acquisition would require prior Governing Board approval of the subject plan)

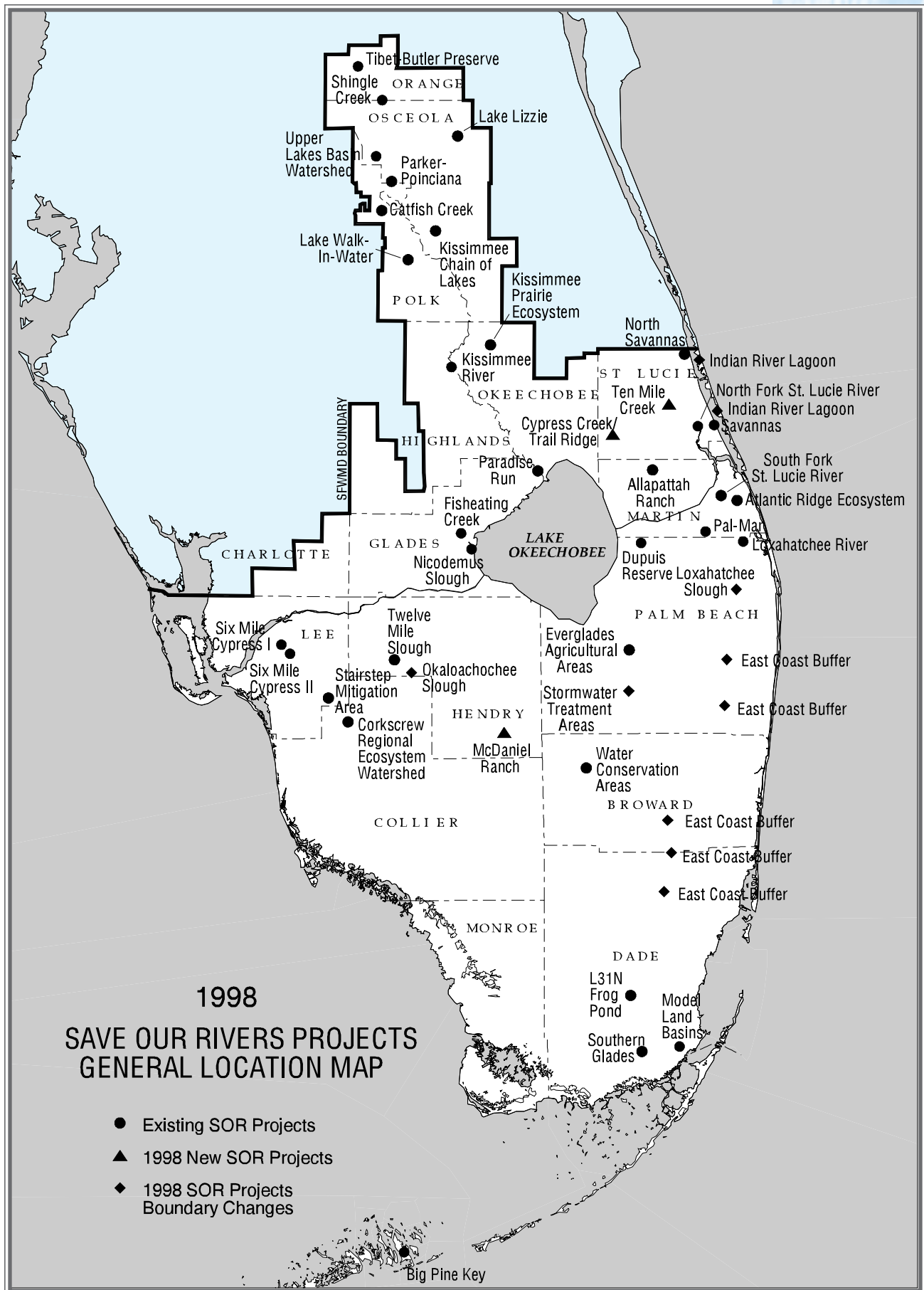
- A. Proposed project lands are identified in a District plan, such as a water use management plan or Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) plan
- B. Subject lands would be used to provide simulated or naturally functioning water resource quality/quantity benefits
- C. Lands would be part of the project resulting in net increase of natural resource values when considering any on-site losses and off-site gains
- D. Capital improvements, such as canals, levees, weirs, and pumps, shall be limited on only those necessary to achieve the proposed water-resource benefits
- E. All appropriate funding sources for acquisition have been identified

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE SAVE OUR RIVERS FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The District's Construction and Land Management Department receives and evaluates all Save Our Rivers project applications and boundary modifications. An evaluation team made up of senior technical staff representing the Planning, Regulation, and Construction and Land Management departments review and score each project.

Staff recommendations are made to the Construction and Land Management director, who circulates them for comment to each District department. Following District comment and widely publicized notification, public workshops are held in geographical locations represented by the new projects.

In July of each year, the staff presents the revised Save Our Rivers Five-Year Plan to the District Governing Board in workshop session. Final Governing Board adoption of the plan is scheduled for August of each year at a public hearing.



and Stewardship

The Florida Resource Rivers Act specifically states that lands acquired with money from the Water Management Lands Trust Fund shall be managed and maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner and, to the practicable extent, in such a way as to restore and protect their natural state and condition and make available to the public for appropriate recreational purposes. Further, Section 373.59, Florida Statutes, as amended, provides that the Water Management Lands Trust Fund may be allocated annually to the District for management, maintenance and capital improvements. District activities directed at achieving this level of stewardship are part of the Stewardship program.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Land Stewardship Program is to plan and implement measures necessary for the proper management of land and associated water areas owned or controlled by the District. These lands generally include those acquired by the Save Our Rivers program and other large holdings not utilized for operational or administrative purposes.

As steward of District lands, the Program is responsible for their protection, enhancement, restoration, and preservation for the beneficial use and enjoyment of existing and future generations. A prime requisite in managing these public lands is to ensure that the water, fish and wildlife populations, native plant communities, and related resources are maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner and made available for appropriate outdoor recreational activities consistent with protection of the water resources.

The Program is primarily directed by the Land Stewardship Division with assistance from several other District departments, service centers and field stations. Considerable assistance in managing the lands is provided by other governmental agencies and volunteers through cooperative agreements. Where appropriate, the private sector is encouraged to undertake certain management activities through leases and concession contracts.

The Program's Mission is composed of six major functions:

1. Strategic, project, and management planning
2. Operation and maintenance of land resources
3. Development of public use programs
4. Development of restoration projects
5. Evaluation of management activities (monitoring)
6. Administration of land management service contracts

In the following pages, progress in each of these six major functions will be outlined.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

The District's Stewardship program uses an adaptive ecosystem management approach with strong consideration for multiple use and renewable resources concepts. We seek and receive considerable assistance in managing our lands from both the public and private sector in funded, voluntary, and revenue type partnerships.

The growth of the District's ownership has accelerated with the additional dollars from P-2000 since 1990. During the first ten years of our program, from 1980 to 1990, we acquired land in nine projects, with fifteen management areas, totalling 150,000 acres. During the period 1990 to 1996, we added six projects, forty-five management areas, and 110,000 acres. Acquisition from July 1, 1996 to September 30, 1997 added 101,220 acres. The program now includes more than 330,000 acres.

RESOURCES

A variety of sources pay for the District's land-management costs (see Figure S-1). The principal source is the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. This state documentary tax stamp revenue totals about \$12 million per year.

As a result of our policy to seek management partnerships, the District receives about \$1 million in in-kind services from the state (Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission) as well as local governments. Most of this money is for law-enforcement services and is about 20 percent of our total effort.

We also have aggressively pursued use of our renewable resources and other revenue-generating opportunities, especially the opportunity available from various regulatory programs seeking off-site mitigation. This growing part of our management funds represents about \$300,000 in annual revenue or 7.5 percent of our total cost. Internal contracting and general administrative overhead meet the final 7.5 percent of the program costs. This support is funded from the District's ad valorem budget.

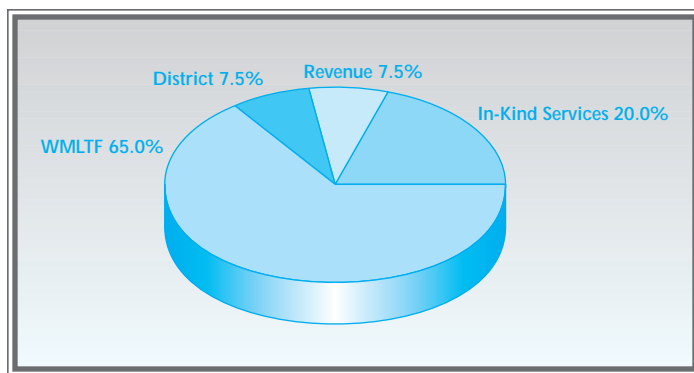


Figure S-1. Management Resources

STEWARDSHIP ELEMENTS (1–6)

The stewardship program involves six elements. The activities and the approximate portions of total effort denoted to each are shown in the figure below.

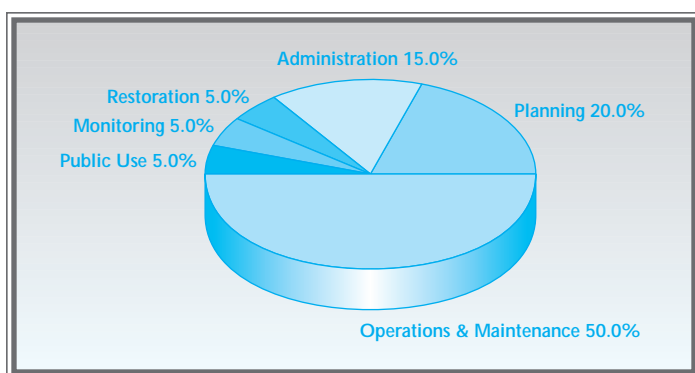


Figure S-2. Stewardship Elements

1. PLANNING

Strategic — The stewardship planning unit prepares and coordinates the development of the SOR Five-Year Plan. This group then integrates the plan with other District planning processes and the land-acquisition and management programs of various state, county, and local government agencies. The District's Land Stewardship Division works closely with the agency's Regulation Department to locate suitable offsite mitigation areas.

Project Planning — The District must evaluate all potential SOR projects before they are placed on the Five-Year Plan. Each year, a team of District professionals, under the direction of the Land Stewardship Division, rates the water and other natural resources of the proposed projects to produce the Five-Year Plan. To date, they have evaluated more than 50 projects and have reviewed numerous project boundary modifications.

Preliminary Management Strategies and Conceptual Management Plans (CMP)

— The District develops preliminary management strategies to guide initial management activities immediately after acquiring the property and before preparing more detailed plans. The conceptual management plan incorporates all relevant information about the project, including resource data, access, past and present land uses, public-use potential, restoration and management needs, and goals and objectives to guide management actions. The District may prepare separate planning documents for restoration projects or substantial recreation programs. Restoration projects typically consist of hydrologic restoration but may also include upland restoration. Conceptual management plans, restoration plans, and public-use plans may be produced in-house or by outside contractors.

Planning Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Ecosystem Restoration Department, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, other water management districts,
Counties:	Orange, Osecola, Polk, Okeechobee, Highlands, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Lee
Other:	The Nature Conservancy, Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Land Management Advisory Committee

FY 97 Planning Highlights

Strategic Planning

- Governing Board approved 1997 acquisition plan, including four new projects and revisions to eight existing projects. These changes added 87,660 acres to the District's land-acquisition plan.
- Governing Board approved a revised policy to evaluate and select lands for the acquisition plan.
- Seven applications submitted for consideration as new/revised acquisition areas for FY '98 plan.
- Acquisitions closing since July 1, 1996, added 101,220 acres of land to District ownership. Total District SOR ownership now exceeds 330,000 acres.
- District staff submitted three major reports on District's acquisition and management programs to various committees of the 1997 Florida Legislature.
- Completed Preservation 2000 needs and priority study.

Project Planning

- Management plans completed for Shingle Creek (final draft) and Lake Marion Creek (first draft).
- Management agreement with Osecola County School Board for Lake Russell tract executed. Management agreement exe-

cuted with The Nature Conservancy for certain lands in Reedy Creek.

FY 98 Objectives

- Prepare 1998 Five-Year Plan; evaluate new SOR projects for 1999
- Conduct reviews for five management areas
- Initiate management plans for Kissimmee River, Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, and Reedy Creek
- Complete management plan for Lake Marion Creek Management Area
- Complete forestry management study

2. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF LAND RESOURCES

The land maintenance program involves a wide range of activities to protect, maintain, and enhance the natural resources and the District's real property assets. Several professional land managers — with unique skills and experience and based in both the service centers and at District headquarters — implement the program. Major program components include:

• Security and Resource Protection.

An integrated program of contractual law enforcement, on-site caretakers, lessees' vigilance, and employer inspections protects the natural resources and District assets. Staff fence boundaries and/or mark them with District ownership signs. The protection program must, however, be open to appropriate public use of the lands.

• Natural Resource Management

Exotic Plant Control — Includes selective application of environmentally acceptable herbicides in a manner that does not harm the natural resources.

Prescribed Burning — Periodic fire is a natural element of native Florida ecosystems. The District uses prescribed burning to reduce hazardous buildup of fuel loads, to enhance wildlife habitat, and to encourage restoration of native-plant communities. The District began burning SOR lands in 1988 and intended to burn the larger tracts on three to five-year rotations, based on resource needs. During both winter and growing seasons, the agency uses burns as a management tool. Prescribed burning is also an integral part of the exotic plant control program and can be used to prepare areas for hydrologic restoration.

• General Maintenance of Improvements, Restoration Structures, and Public Use Facilities

The many firelines, roads, fences, culverts, houses, and sheds associated with SOR lands require general maintenance. This

includes building and discing fire lines, mowing roadsides, grading roads, replacing and repairing culverts, and repairing and replacing perimeter fences. Houses, barns, and sheds also require periodic maintenance and repair.

Maintenance Partners

Internal:	Operations and Maintenance Department, General Services Division
State/Federal:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Counties:	Orange, Palm Beach, Lee
Other:	Lessees, User Groups, Non-profit organizations

FY 97 Highlights

Exotic Control

- District contractors and field staff treated exotic plants on nearly 9,000 acres in four project areas.

Prescribed Burning

- Staff from the Land Stewardship Division, the Okeechobee field station, and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission conducted prescribed burns on almost 3,000 acres in three areas.

Vegetation management

- More than 1,000 acres were roller-chopped to reduce woody vegetation and prepare pine flatwoods for prescribed burning.

Security

- Posted more than 20 miles of District boundary and replaced fence for nearly 10 miles.
- Executed lease with law enforcement officers to live in District housing.
- Met with Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and other water management districts to discuss/review law-enforcement programs.
- Initiated quarterly reports on law-enforcement activities.

FY 98 Objectives

Operations and Maintenance

- Conduct exotic-plant control activities on 10,000 acres
- Conduct prescribed burns on 5,000 acres
- Roller-chop and mow 1,000 acres
- Construct 10 miles of fence
- Post 20 miles of boundary

3. PUBLIC USE PROGRAMS

The District encourages public access to and use of its lands for appropriate outdoor recreational activities, consistent with the

agency's legal interest and preservation and management of the water and environmental resources.

Recreational development focuses on the provision of basic facilities for access, health and safety, and interpretation. Special consideration is given to the provision of outdoor recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities. Where appropriate, the District considers the provision of needed facilities and services through concession contracts and/or agreements with private non-profit organizations.

These activities are described for each management unit in the District's Public Use Guide.

Public Use Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Ecosystem Restoration Department, Field Stations
State/Federal:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
Counties:	Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Lee
Other:	Florida Trail Association, DuPuis Horsemen Association, Florida Sportmen's Conservation Association, Kissimmee River Valley Sportsman Association, DuPuis Users Committee, CREW Trust

FY 97 Public Use Highlights

- FY '97 Public Use Guide rule revision approved without major objections from any user groups.
- 10,000 additional acres opened to public use.
- Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission opened 4,000 acres to small game hunting in Kissimmee valley.
- One-page summary of Public Use Guide "map" produced.
- Volunteer/user-group contacts increased.
- User fee study contract initiated.
- Revenue from public use at DuPuis Reserve substantially increased.
- Quarterly report initiated to estimate public use on SOR properties.
- User response cards included in Public Use Guide and Five-Year Plan.

FY '98 objectives

- Complete user fee study
- Revise format for Public Use Guide
- Develop memoranda of understanding with volunteer groups.
- Construct/improve three user access points.

4. RESTORATION

Natural features of South Florida's landscape are rapidly disappearing because of encroaching agricultural and urban development. A major thrust of the Save Our Rivers program is to protect

the flowways, watersheds, and wetlands, all critical to the water resources of the District. Common disturbances to SOR lands include clearing to improve pasture and drainage. The Land Stewardship Division assesses SOR lands for hydrologic and environmental restoration needs and recommends how to correct those impacts. Restoration projects may be funded, designed, constructed, and maintained by the District, by developers as mitigation, or by a combination of methods.

Habitat enhancement on SOR lands includes a combination of hydrologic restoration in wetlands, prescribed burning to improve forage for wildlife and maintain native plant communities, and control of exotic vegetation.

A major stewardship task is to return SOR lands as close to their original natural state, hydrologically, as possible. This improves groundwater storage in wetlands, water quality by slowing runoff, and habitat for fish and wildlife. The SOR program is conducting several small hydrologic restorations, but the primary focus is on the nationally significant program to restore the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, and Everglades ecosystem. Several SOR acquisition projects are contributing directly to the effort to restore and protect the vital water and natural resources of South Florida.

Restoration Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Field Stations, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
Counties:	Lee
Mitigation:	Florida Power & Light, Florida Department of Transportation, Palm Beach County, Orlando Beltway Authority

FY 97 Restoration Highlights

- Use of off-site mitigation funds from District permits initiated for DuPuis Reserve, CREW, and Shingle Creek projects.
- Revised plans for Johnson Island (Lake Hatchineah) completed in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy and Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- District approves Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission proposal for hydroperiod management of Terrytown Water Management Area.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed fill from wetland on District property on Big Pine Key.

FY 98 Objectives

- Complete mitigation bank project
- Develop standard off-site mitigation procedures
- Design upland restoration project

5. EVALUATION OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

(MONITORING)

A major objective of the Save Our Rivers program is to restore and maintain the natural condition of SOR land resources. The Land Stewardship Division has an established monitoring program to evaluate its management and restoration activities, including hydrologic restoration, prescribed burning, and exotic vegetation control.

The division uses an established protocol for vegetative and photographic monitoring. Staff compile photographs and written summaries into an annual report. Vegetative sampling data is stored on GIS databases for future analysis.

Evaluation Partners

Internal:	Ecosystem Restoration Department, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
Counties:	Palm Beach
Others:	Private contractors, The Nature Conservancy

FY 97— Evaluation of Management Activities Highlights

- Continued routine data collection at six locations.
- Completed cattle closures for pasture restoration study; initiated data collection.
- Published paper on barn owls.
- Continued inventories of natural resources with outside contractors.
- Hired AmeriCorps employee for routine data collection.

FY 98 Objectives

- Continue resource inventories
- Design inventory for conservation easements
- Develop contract for routine monitoring services

6. ADMINISTRATION OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SERVICE CONTRACTS

Contractual agreements for management services and leases on District land are an important part of the stewardship program. The program currently administers more than 90 contracts, agreements, leases, and reservations. The program prepares contract specifications, negotiates terms, and monitors compliance. Managing the number and diversity of these contracts is a substantial task.

The number and types of contracts can be summarized into four groups.

Type	Number
Funded Specific/General Management Services	21
Unfunded General Management Services	16
Revenue Leases and Reservations	40
Recreation Agreements	16

Administrative & Service Partners

Internal:	Management Services, Legal Office, Office of Budget and Procurement
State/Federal:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Counties:	Martin, Highlands, Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, Orange, Lee

FY 97 — Administrative & Service Highlights

- Executed agreement with AIM Engineering for management of Nicodemus Slough.
- Executed eight agriculture leases.
- Initiated revised cattle lease RFP (request for proposal) for three grazing sites.
- Initiated RFP for two agricultural leases.
- Initiated lease with State of Florida for Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem.
- Executed agreement with Highlands County for management of Lockett Estate.
- Continued negotiations for two mitigation banks.
- Created new unit to manage revenue contracts.

FY 98 Objectives

- Increase revenue on interim management lands
- Execute management agreements for Okaloacoochee Slough and Pool A of Kissimmee River.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Land Stewardship Division adopted performance measures for FY '97 based on recommendations of a 1995 internal audit. These standards gauge the efficiency of the stewardship program through its assigned tasks. Based on the historical data presented below, the program has adopted the following performance goals:

- (1) 7,000 acres per stewardship employee
- (2) \$20/acre/year management cost
- (3) 20 percent of management cost from non-public funds

In addition to these performance measures, each functional area and employee also have criteria to measure progress towards the District's stewardship goals. Below, a table illustrates the program's performance in a number of categories.

LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

For Profit and Non-Profit Land Management Providers

FY 97 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	FY 90/91	FY 91/92	FY 92/93	FY 93/94	FY 94/95	FY 95/96
SOR Acres Purchased (Total)	147,300	161,000	163,700	180,000	215,800	228,960
Cost (Total)	\$118,071,000	\$134,178,000	\$138,700,000	\$164,248,800	\$209,100,000	\$250,000,000
Acres Managed (Total)	97,000	102,000	107,000	128,000	140,502	150,000
Management Expenditures (Public Dollars)	\$1,742,000	\$1,472,000	\$2,136,000	\$2,227,000	\$3,928,000(1)	\$3,220,044
# Employees in Stewardship Program	15	17	17	19	21	26(3)
Management Cost/Acre	\$18.00	\$14.40	\$19.95	\$17.50	\$27.95(2)	\$21.50
Acre/Employee	6,500	6,000	6,300	6,700	6,700	5,770

(1) Includes \$1,338,000 of fixed capital cost (primarily L-8 levee restoration)

(2) Management cost excluding capital outlay = \$18.43/acre/year for FY 94/95

(3) Includes all employees with 100 percent salaries paid by WMLTF.

Note: The acres managed in this analysis exclude the water conservation areas and several other project areas managed entirely by other entities. In addition, the management expenditures include only SOR funds minus lease revenues. The cost-per-acre rates do not include any estimates of the value of in-kind services. It is estimated that the in-kind services are equivalent to about 20 percent of the total management cost of all District ownership. Revenue from various leases and off-site mitigation requirements is growing rapidly and now provides about 7.5 percent of the management funds. Internal contracting and general support from other District departments also represent about 7.5 percent of the management effort.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The program provides a variety of products to an array of internal and external customers. A summary of our customer list and products includes:

Internal

Governing Board

- Annual updates of SOR Acquisition Plan
- Annual update of Public Use Guide
- Land Stewardship Management Policies and Plans

Real Estate Division

- Technical review of acquisition strategies and proposals
- Management appraisals of acquisition parcels

Regulation Department

- Consultation on off-site mitigation proposals

Service Centers

- Stewardship program policies and programs

Government and Public Affairs

- Pertinent information regarding public-use activities and opportunities

External

State Agencies and Local Government

- Assistance in developing comprehensive ecosystem management program for land and water resources.
- Opportunities for management partnerships

For Profit and Non-Profit Land Management Providers

- Fair opportunity to participate in appropriate management activities

General Public

- Appropriate public use opportunities
- Healthy/Recovering ecosystems contributing to the welfare of the state

Seventh Generation

- A self functioning ecosystem contributing to an economy based on the principles of sustainable natural resources.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The District employs a diversified strategy to implement its land stewardship program. The ever-increasing size and complexity of the program's management needs require this approach. The foundations of this program are: (1) a core professional management group, (2) internal contracting, (3) cooperative management agreements, and (4) alternative funding.

1. Core Professional Management Group — A select number of District employees plan and manage the functions of the land stewardship program. This group includes professional land managers assigned to service centers. These employees have specific geographical responsibilities for comprehensive management in their respective areas. They also have special areas of management expertise that they share with other managers throughout the agency.

A highly trained field crew supports the professional staff by performing diversified tasks throughout the District. Crew members prepare and execute the fire-management plans for each area. They also control exotic plants and conduct general operations and maintenance services, as time permits.

District staff carries out the planning functions previously described and evaluate and monitor the District's natural resources and the effectiveness of the management program.

2. Internal Contracting — Several other District programs provide substantial management services to the land stewardship program. The most prominent is the availability of general maintenance services from the District's field stations. The program has developed a process by which the SOR land-management needs for general maintenance may be contracted to a field station.

These functions include roadside mowing, road maintenance, small culvert and ditch repair, as well as carpentry, electrical, and plumbing work on various houses.

The land stewardship program also relies on the District's vegetation management division to coordinate large jobs to control exotic plants, and the Management Services Department to manage and dispose of some real property assets not integral to the SOR mission.

This "internal contracting" reduces duplication and uses all existing capability to the maximum extent possible.

3. Cooperative Management Agreements — The District has numerous land management service agreements, primarily with other local, state, and federal agencies. They may involve complete management responsibility or specific services and may or may not be District-funded.

There are several advantages of these agreements that include the following factors:

a) **Expertise.** Other agencies provide knowledge, experience, and capabilities not available to the District. It is more cost effective to use this expertise from other agencies rather than to develop it.

b) **Location.** In several cases, local governments or other agencies are more conveniently located to provide essential services than the District.

c) **Continuity of Program.** District land adjacent to other public lands can be managed as part of the larger ownership.

d) **Local Benefits.** When people in a particular area almost exclusively use some District lands, it is appropriate for local programs to manage these lands because they are the ones who directly benefit.

4. Alternative Funding — Since 1989, the District has paid for SOR stewardship functions out of the management portion of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. The District has augmented these funds in several ways:

In-Kind Services — As previously noted, several management agreements are at no cost to the District for either complete management services or selected services such as surveillance and law enforcement.

Revenue Agreements/Leases — The District has various land-use leases that it obtained with the land purchase or developed to use renewable resources. The principal type of lease is for native-range cattle grazing. Several other agreements involve short-term use of lands that are in an interim management condition.

User Fees — (c) User fees ? This source of revenue is relatively new to the District, although most user groups support reasonable fees and are willing to contribute in-kind services. The District has good experiences with several user groups on developing and maintaining trails, trailheads, and primitive camping areas.

Mitigation — Perhaps the most promising revenue source is through locating off-site mitigation projects on District's SOR lands. The District's stewardship program has received benefits in this manner in the form of land acquisition, restoration, and general management fees and services. This program will need to become more familiarized and structured and requires increased pre-acquisition planning. However, it offers the promise of substantial revenue to assist with covering the costs of managing SOR lands.

Mitigation Funding — Acquisition, preservation, and enhancement or restoration, and management of the East Coast Buffer, CREW, Shingle Creek, Upper Lakes Basin Watershed and Dupuis Reserve projects has been and will continue to be partially funded with mitigation money generated in accordance with Section 373.414(1)(b)1., F.S.. This Governing Board action is intended to duly notice these projects in conformance with Section 373.414(1)(b)1., F.S.



Acquisition Summary

Acquisition from the beginning of the Save Our Rivers program in 1981 through June 1996 totaled 228,960 acres of land (Includes lands purchased by others within SOR project boundaries)

Acquisition during the 1996 Plan period (July 1996 - June 1997) added approximately 95,745 acres. More than 1,000 of these acres were many small less than fee acquisitions. Property was purchased in 16 different projects. The larger acres were purchased in the Kissimmee River Ecosystem (38,000 acres), Kissimmee River Restoration (15,000 acres), and Okaloacoochee Slough (22,000 acres). Due to wide variations in the market value of land among projects, the most money was spent in the Stormwater Treatment Areas and East Coast Buffer. Both in terms of acres and dollars, the acquisition program made great progress in acquiring lands in our critical Kissimmee/Everglades/Florida projects. The Kissimmee projects are very near complete, while the Stormwater Treatment Areas are more than fifty percent (50%) acquired. In addition to these purchases, an additional 10,000 acres have been approved for purchase, but have not yet closed.

The District is adjusting the Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan to coincide with the fiscal year, October 1-September 30. Therefore, This plan will include acquisition for a period of one year and three months. Acquisition during the additional three-month period (July 1, 1997 - September 30, 1997 added 5,475 acres. See Table 2 for details of which lands were purchased during the fifteen-month reporting period. These acquisitions bring the Save Our Rivers program total for September 30, 1997, to 330,180 acres.

ACQUISITION ACTIVITY — ACQUISITIONS JULY 1, 1996 - SEPTEMBER 30, 1997

<u>Project</u>	<u>Closed</u>	<u>Pending</u>
CREW	62	10
East Coast Buffer	4,222	943
Everglades Buffer Strip	5	0
Kissimmee Chain of Lakes	2,147	2,055
Kissimmee Prairie	38,315	0
Kissimmee River	13,291	394
L-31 North	426	73
Model Lands	1,270	734
North Fork St. Lucie	292	21
Okaloacoochee Slough	21,702	0
Pal-Mar	630	0
Southern Glades	242	708
Stairstep	633	0
STAs	13,548	146
Upper Lakes Basin	1,472	27
Water Management Area	1,233	737
Water Conservation Area	1,730	20
TOTAL	101,220	



Acquisition Plan

The 1998 SOR Five-Year Acquisition Plan includes District staff anticipation that significant cost-sharing will occur with the state and local governments. For the 1998 SOR Five-Year Plan, the staff used the following criteria to establish the general acquisition priority for qualified SOR projects.

1. Standing on the District Strategic Plan

SOR land acquisition is an integral element of the District's overall strategic plan for resource management. The priority of SOR land acquisition needs, as established by the Plan, must be directly translated to the SOR acquisition priority.

2. Potential for Resource Loss

Continued development activity in and around identified SOR projects raises concerns about loss of resource values for these projects if they are not protected by outright purchase or conservation easements. The Departments of Planning and Regulation, as well as local governments, are consulted annually as to the trend in development pressures around various SOR projects.

3. Potential for Cooperative Acquisitions

Several SOR projects are potentially qualified for cost sharing with other state and local agencies. Other projects are located in counties with land acquisition programs. Projects that can be acquired and/or managed with cost-sharing programs and remain consistent with SOR objectives receive priority consideration. It is important to establish the intent of the potential partner before granting a priority status.

4. Disposition of Owner(s)

The expressed willingness of the owner(s) of specific tracts within an SOR project is a factor in the acquisition priority consideration. Conversely, well managed lands owned by private interests reluctant to sell are given a low priority, even if the resource values are high.

Although this priority analysis applies to SOR projects, it may be necessary to single out certain key tracts within a project as the critical factor for a priority; that is, the status or priority of certain core tracts within a project may determine the priority of the overall project. In these cases, the commitment of funds to the project should be to acquire the core pieces.

The Priority Acquisition Plan was developed using these criteria.

The acquisition resources of the District will be specifically directed to accomplish this plan. However, any qualified SOR project may be considered for acquisition during the life of this plan as conditions and circumstances warrant.

The objective of the Save Our Rivers program is to acquire necessary interests in lands for water management, water supply, conservation and protection of water resources. The Five-Year Plan shows projects that have been determined to meet the Save Our Rivers objectives. Projects have been submitted from a variety of sources and analyzed through the District Save Our Rivers matrix. However, financial and other constraints may not allow acquisition of all lands included in the Five-Year Plan.

The Five-Year Plan indicates to local governments that certain lands within their jurisdiction meet the criteria for Save Our Rivers project consideration. Budget, or other considerations, may constrain the acquisition of these lands. Accordingly, local governments should use the Five-Year Plan as only one of the many criteria in making land use planning evaluations.

NEW PROJECTS/BOUNDARY REVISIONS

During 1997, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board authorized mid-year revisions to the Five Year Plan:

- A. Ten Mile Creek--1,266 Acres
- B. Kissimmee River Addition--6,359 Acres

A. Changes to 1997 Five Year

In 1997, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board authorized the addition of two new projects to the Five Year Plan, as well as boundary modifications to four existing projects. The Board authorized deleting one project from the Plan, Osceola Pine Savannas.

<u>New Projects</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Cypress Creek/Trail Ridge	13,788
McDaniel Ranch	7,000

<u>Project Additions</u>	<u>Acres</u>
<u>(Boundary Modifications)</u>	
East Coast Buffer	5,657
Indian River Lagoon	1,015
Okaloacoochee Slough	1,920
Loxahatchee Slough	7,315
Stormwater Treatment Areas	1,300

1997 SAVE OUR RIVERS FIVE YEAR PLAN SCHEDULE

March 1998 Deadline for new project applications

May 1998 Land Selection Committee meeting – discussion of new projects/boundary changes

June 1998 Land Selection Committee meeting – discussion of 1998 priority projects and spending plan

August 1998 Governing Board Workshop on new projects/boundary changes

September 1998 Governing Board public hearing to adopt 1998 Five Year Plan

1998 FIVE YEAR PLAN — SOR PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Potential Acquisition Partner
Kissimmee River Restoration	Federal Government
EAA Lands	Everglades Privilege Tax
East Coast Buffer	CARL
Florida Bay	CARL/Dade County
Ten Mile Creek	St. Lucie County/Federal Government
Upper Lakes Basin	Mitigation/Polk County
Pal-Mar	CARL/Martin & Palm Beach Counties
CREW	CARL/Lee County
North Fork St. Lucie River	St. Lucie County
Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem	CARL
Indian River Lagoon	CARL/St. Lucie County/Federal Government
Parker-Poinciana	The Nature Conservancy
Lake Walk-In-Water	Polk County
Loxahatchee Slough	Palm Beach County
Okaloachoochee Slough	CARL
Shingle Creek	Mitigation
McDaniel Ranch	CARL
Cypress Creek	CARL/St. Lucie County

The 1996 Legislative changes to the program enacted a guideline that projects requiring full fee acquisition must be identified in the Five Year Plan. Other projects shown in the plan are either completed or would be acceptable by acquiring less than fee.

Project	Approved Acres	Acquisition Requirement
EAA Lands (Talisman)	49,027	Fee title required
East Coast Buffer	69,422	Fee title required
Frog Pond/L-31N	10,600	Fee title required
Kissimmee River (Lower Basin)	75,433	Fee title required
Kissimmee River (Upper Basin)	32,116	Fee title required
Parker-Poinciana	1,970	Fee title required
Stormwater Treatment Areas	44,500	Fee title required
Ten Mile Creek	1,266	Fee title required
Water Conservation Areas	256,000	Fee title required

P

reservation 2000 Needs

PRESERVATION 2000 NEEDS AND PRIORITIES STUDY

In 1997, the Florida Legislature enacted a law (HB 1119), which requires the water management districts and the CARL (Conservation and Recreational Lands) program to submit reports by October 1, 1997, outlining the remaining needs and priorities for the three final years of P-2000. The new law further states that the reports shall determine the following:

- What ecological resources are inadequately represented in the District's public land inventory and which approved projects can best fill the needs identified
- Projects with significant historical or archaeological importance
- For projects in which an acquisition has been completed, the minimal lands needed to be acquired for resource protection and effective management
- Significant natural areas and watersheds which can be conserved by the use of conservation easements or other less-than-fee techniques
- The best method of completing the P-2000 program to ensure that the program achieves its mission

Because of the close overlap between the District's Save Our Rivers/P-2000 program and the CARL/P-2000 program, state agencies associated with the CARL program prepared some parts of this study.

The South Florida Water Management District's Governing Board adopted this agency's portion of the report on September 11, 1997, and forwarded it to the Legislature. For the sake of space, only the executive summary is included in this Save Our Rivers Five-Year Plan. Please contact the District's land stewardship division at (561-687-6635) for a full copy of the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

P-2000 accomplishments

The South Florida Water Management District is responsible for the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the ecosystem encompassing the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, and the Everglades. The District is also responsible for water supply planning in one of the fastest-growing regions of the country.

A third major mission is the expansion and refinement of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project. These three missions, plus the desire to augment state and local efforts to restore and preserve significant ecological resources, have generated an 865,000-acre land-acquisition plan. A series of District, state, and federal studies identified these projects.

The District's Save Our Rivers land acquisition and management report, which consists of 40 individual projects (Figure 1), is designed to achieve one or more of the objectives listed below:

Project Type

- Water resource management
- Regional ecosystem
- Local preservation protection
- Water conservation areas

Objective

- Protect water supply & provide water
- Protect unique ecological resources
- Augment state & local natural resource
- Secure fee title

The District has acquired more than 315,000 acres in 25 separate projects at a cost of \$458 million (Figure 2). The 31,800 acres of less-than-fee land purchased to date include 7,500 acres of flowage easements in the Kissimmee Valley and 24,300 acres of gas, oil, and mineral rights in the Everglades (water conservation areas).

The District used P-2000 money to acquire land in the Everglades Protection Area (stormwater treatment areas) and the Florida Bay emergency interim plan (Frog Pond/Rocky Glades). Both projects are 70 percent complete. These lands are necessary to reestablish historic hydropatterns and improve water quality in the Everglades.

P-2000 funds were used to acquire 80 percent of the lands necessary to restore the Kissimmee River. P-2000 funds have also purchased environmentally significant lands in CARL projects, including CREW (Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed), Horsecreek Scrub, and the North Fork St. Lucie River.

P-2000 priorities for remaining years

The District's acquisition plan for use of the remaining P-2000 funds is based on five criteria: state and federal mandates to complete acquisition; probability that owners are willing to sell; threat of loss of resources; availability of matching funds, and potential for less-than-fee acquisition.

The *P-2000 Needs and Priorities Study* identified 491,000 acres of P-2000 priority projects. Available P-2000 funds, plus funds from other federal, state, and local programs, as well as mitigation funds, will allow the purchase of 316,000 of these acres, while 175,000 priority acres have no identified funding sources. Funded purchases will complete the stormwater treatment areas and the Florida Bay emergency interim plan and several other important ecological projects jointly purchased with CARL. This study recommends that 64,226 acres be acquired as less than fee and that 25,000 acres be deleted from the original project designs.

Remaining acquisition needs after P-2000

The unmet needs identified in the *P-2000 Needs and Priorities Study* include vitally important water-resource development projects and all or part of important natural resource projects. District planning studies have identified general land-acquisition needs for additional water-storage projects in the Kissimmee, Upper East Coast and Caloosahatchee basins.

District staff believes that water-conservation easements could be used to preserve or restore the functions of both pristine and/or altered wetlands. Local governments have also identified several new projects and additions to existing projects.

After the P-2000 program concludes in the year 2000, continued state support of land acquisition will still be required to assure the preservation and development of water and water-related natural resources for a sustainable South Florida.